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Letters to the Editor

The Congo's Chance for Peace

In reporting on the Congo situation in The Washington Post of Dec. 1, one of your correspondents stated that Ambassador Sullivan had succeeded in bringing Prime Minister Adoula and President Tshombe together. After Senator Dodd's unsuccessful attempt to bring Adoula and Tshombe together three weeks ago.

In visiting the Congo during the last week of November it was one of my purposes to explore informally the possibility of an Adoula-Tshombe entente.

Before leaving the United States, I communicated with Ambassador Stevenson and with others, expressing my concern over the pending U. N. resolution. It was clear to me at that time that the Soviets would not accept Ambassador Stevenson's amendments and that, if the resolution were passed at all by the Security Council, it would be the original Afro-Asian version, which was directed specifically and exclusively against Katanga.

Such a resolution, it seemed to me, would inevitably be considered a declaration of imminent war by the Katangese and would seriously impair the chances of peaceful conciliation. I therefore expressed the hope in my communication to Ambassador Stevenson that it would at least prove possible to postpone action on the Security Council resolution until after I had had an opportunity to discuss the situation with Prime Minister Adoula and President Tshombe. Unfortunately, this was not to be.

On Friday, Nov. 24, after the Soviets had vetoed Ambassador Stevenson's amendments, the U. N. resolution in its original Afro-Asian form was passed by the Security Council, with the United States and the Soviet Union voting "aye," while Britain and France abstained.

Against this background, I arrived in the Congo two days later, that is, Sunday, Nov. 26. I had a long and fruitful

talk with both Adoula and Tshombe. Minister Adoula and President Tshombe were both very cooperative and friendly.

On Tuesday, Nov. 27, I met with both Adoula and Tshombe. I was very interested in their views on the situation.

It was my intention to have been previously advised of the position of Adoula and the moderates in the Leopoldville government. I was informed that they were not the support of the Katangese moderates. If they were to survive, on the other hand, Tshombe is wise enough to realize that an independent Katanga could not survive the day if the rest of the Congo went Communist.

At the time I met with Tshombe, the tension in Elisabethville was something that could be seen with the eye and felt in the air. The Katangese had construed the Security Council resolution as a green light for all-out U. N. military action; and no one can blame them for doing so, because it was so construed by its Afro-Asian supporters and by the world press. Armed men belonging to rival armies rubbed shoulders in the streets, their fingers on their triggers, their hatred for each other unconcealed. It was a situation in which incidents were inevitable and serious bloodshed more than probable.

Despite the Security Council resolution and the tension in Elisabethville, Tshombe told me that he was prepared to meet with Minister Adoula, any day, but Leopoldville because the last time he had met with representatives of the Leopoldville government in their territory, they had put him in prison. The State Department, I am certain, was not aware of Tshombe's statement because American Consul Lewis Hoffacker was present while I talked to Tshombe. In addition, I cabled a long report on my conversa-

tion to the President through the Department of State.

Five days after my conversation with Tshombe, on Dec. 1, President Tshombe, while passing through Elisabethville to Paris, on his own initiative established contact with Prime Minister Adoula and urged an immediate meeting. Back came the old stand-pat answer: Leopoldville or nothing. Within 48 hours the fighting erupted in Elisabethville.

I am convinced that, given a realistic action at this point and given a combination of good will and pressure directed to both sides, Tshombe and Adoula could have been brought together in time to avert the U. N. from the cruel and inglorious military action in which it finds itself involved.

I am convinced that, all the bloodshed, all the destruction, all the chaos, all the hatred, all the division between ourselves and our allies, could have been avoided.

I believe that a durable agreement, based on the voluntary consent of both parties, could have been achieved.

I am fearful, on the other hand, that the agreement announced at Kitona may prove fragile precisely because, as Arthur Krock and other commentators have pointed out, it was born in blood and in military and political coercion, and apparently conceived in the spirit of "Vae victis."

The Kitona agreement can be a beginning. But if the Congo is to be spared another bloodbath, more than the Kitona agreement will be necessary. Above all, it will require a mutual willingness to compromise on the part of both Leopoldville and Elisabethville, and some concrete manifestations of good will towards Tshombe and Katanga on our part and on the part of the United Nations.

THOMAS J. DODD,

United States Ambassador
Kinshasa, Congo (Kinshasa)
Washington.